



Request for Committee Action From the Office of City Clerk

Date: June 25, 2012

To: Honorable Cam Gordon, Chair
Elections Committee

Subject: Establishment of an Absentee Ballot Board

Recommendation: Adopt a resolution to establish an Absentee Ballot Board, pursuant to Minnesota Statutes 203B.121, to receive and process absentee ballots for all future elections conducted by the City of Minneapolis.

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Approved by:	Casey Joe Carl, City Clerk	

Background Information: State election law authorizes a municipality to establish an Absentee Ballot Board to process absentee ballots for federal, state, and municipal elections. The statutorily-prescribed duties of an Absentee Ballot Board can be divided into two primary functions.

The first function of the board is to accept or reject completed absentee ballot envelopes, whether received via US Postal Service or done in-person at City Hall. The board is also responsible for tracking ballot activity in the Statewide Voter Registration System (SVRS) and providing replacement absentee ballots for any rejected ballots that are deemed incomplete or deficient according to state election law. Pursuant to Minn. Stat. 203B.121, subd. 1, these functions may be performed by election staffers trained as election judges; and, furthermore, if election staffers perform these functions, they are exempt from other requirements related to party balance provided under Minn. Stat. 204B.19, subd. 5, and 204C.15. Allowing election staff to conduct these initial tasks helps to expedite the internal processing of conducting elections.

The second function of the board is to process accepted absentee ballots. This activity includes removing accepted absentee ballots from envelopes, preparing the ballots for tabulation, tabulating the ballots, and securing them. State law provides that these activities may commence as early as four days prior to an election. These functions do require party balance and are performed by certified election judges.

Consequently, the Clerk's Office – Elections Division is requesting the adoption of a resolution to permanently establish an Absentee Ballot Board, as provided pursuant to Minn. Stat. 203B.121. This will eliminate the need for an annual "creation" of an Absentee Ballot Board. The actual appointment of election judges to serve as members of the Absentee Ballot Board may then be processed and approved by City Council along with the appointment of all other election judges serving for a specific election event, as provided under Minn. Stat. 204B.21, subd. 2, and Minneapolis City Charter Chapter 2 §6. If approved, the City Council will still be required to make appointments to the Absentee Ballot Board, but will not have to act to "create" the board for each election. This will further streamline our internal processes and eliminate one additional step in the process of preparing for an election event.